

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6385

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, IN

SUBJECT: PORT STRIKE

REF: NEW DELHI 0847

1. AS OF C. O. B. JANUARY 17, PORT STRIKE THROUGHOUT INDIA WAS VIRTUALLY COMPLETE AND PEACEFUL. THUS FAR NO ARRESTS ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN MADE OF STRIKERS FOR REFUSING TO COMPLY WITH BACK-TO-WORK ORDER UNDER DEFENSE OF INDIA RULES. ACCORDING TO A GOI SPOKESMAN, THERE ARE 191 SHIPS CAUGHT IN THE STRIKE, INCLUDING 20 CARRYING 300,000 TONS OF FOOD GRAINS AND 16 WITH 120,000 TONS OF FERTILIZER. THE CONSULATES REPORT THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONCERNING THE SITUATIONS IN THEIR DISTRICTS.

2. BOMBAY: IN ANTICIPATION OF THE STRIKE, THE GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA STATE AND THE FOOD CORPORATION OF

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INDIA HAVE STORED GRAIN IN AAA CITY ADEQUATE TO COVER ITS

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BALANCE OF JANUARY. THE REFINERIES OF BURMAH SHELL AND HINDUSTAN PETROLEUM REPORTEDLY HAVE CRUDE FOR ONLY 6 TO 8 DAYS AND WILL BE OBLIGED TO SHUT DOWN IF FURTHER SUPPLIES OF CRUDE ARE NOT RECEIVED. IN ADDITION TO THE 60 SHIPS ANCHORED IN MIDSTREAM, A FEW MORE VESSELS ARE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE DESPITE WARNINGS ISSUED BY THE PORT AUTHORITIES ABOUT THE STRIKE. OPERATIONS AT MARUGAO AND KANDLA ALSO REPORTED TO BE AT A STANDSTILL.

3. CALCUTTA: WORKERS HAVE GROUPED OUTSIDE THE PORT AREA PERMITTING NO ENTRANCE, WHILE POLICE AND NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FORCE ARE INSIDE THE PORT (PRESUMABLY TO PROTECT FACILITIES). UNLOADING HAS COMPLETELY STOPPED.

4. MADRAS AND COCHIN: PORTS COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN. MINOR SCUFFLES OCCURED ON JANUARY 16 WHEN STRIKERS AT MADRAS PREVENTED DOCK LABOR BOARD STAFF EMPLOYEES FROM GOING TO WORK. PORT OFFICIALS ORIGINALLY BELIEVED THAT STRIKERS WOULD NOT FINANCIALLY BE ABLE TO CONTINUE STRIKE FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD AND THAT GOI WOULD WAIT UNIONS OUT. THESE SOURCES NOW HAVE RECONSIDERED THEIR ANALYSIS AND ARE IMPRESSED THAT STRIKERS ARE WELL ORGANIZED, COHESIVE, AND ADAMANT. STRIKERS MAY HAVE SOME CUSHION ON WHICH TO FALL BACK AND COOPERATIVES ARE EXTENDING CREDIT TO THEM. SEVENTEEN SHIPS WERE CAUGHT BY THE STRIKE IN MADRAS, INCLUDING 3 FOODGRAIN SHIPS AND 4 CARRYING FERTILIZER. CARE REPRESENTATIVE HAS SAID THAT STRIKE POSES NO IMMEDIATE PROBLEM FOR FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM, AS THERE ARE SUFFICIENT STOCKS STORED FOR ONE TO TWO MONTHS. MADRAS REFINERY HAS CRUDE FOR ONLY 7-8 DAYS THROUGHOUT, BUT PORT AUTHORITIES HAVE SAID THAT OFF-LOADING OF CRUDE WILL CONTINUE DESPITE STRIKE, AS IT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED MECHANICALLY WITH HELP OF A FEW OFFICERS AT ISOLATED OIL BERTH WHICH TANKERS CAN REACH WITHOUT TUGS.

5. PRESS REPORTS THAT THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION HAS STATED THAT SHIPS, IRRESPECTIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF NATIONALITY, WHICH ARE HANDLED BY STRIKE BREAKERS WOULD BE BOYCOTTED AT PORTS OUTSIDE OF INDIA. THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF SEAFARERS OF INDIA HAS ALSO VOICED SUPPORT FOR THE PORT STRIKE. SCHNEIDER

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